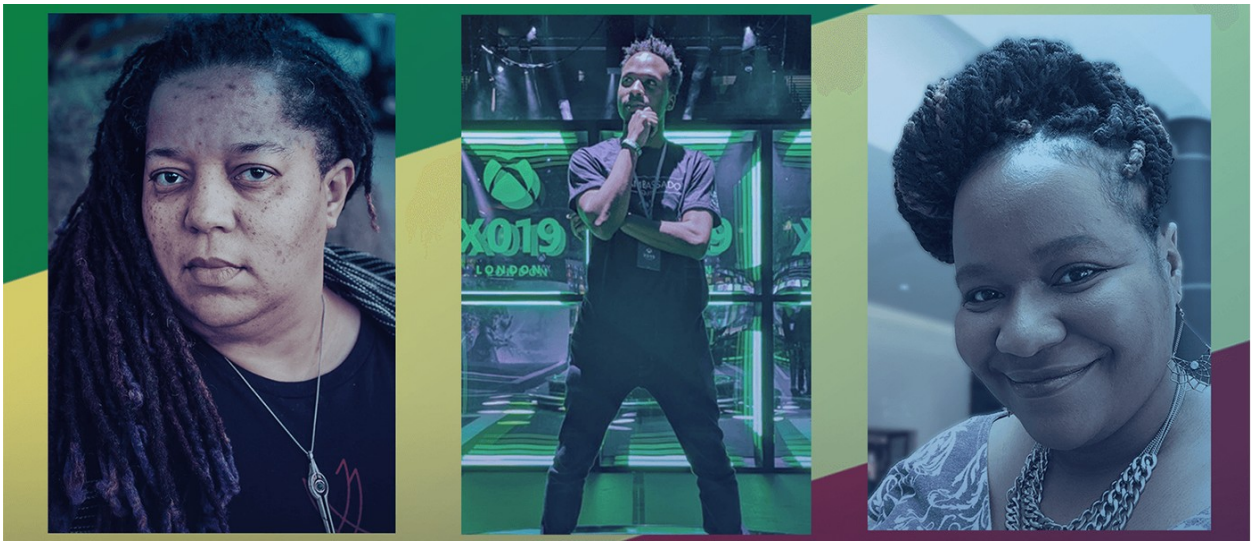

Celebrating Black History Month 2020

Community Procrow Feb 13, 2020

For Black History Month, we at the Xbox Ambassadors want to highlight some of the black industry professionals who inspire us. As the month progresses we'll highlight each individual here, giving them the top spot for a week. Each one of them provides wisdom from perspectives on gaming, content creation, and moderation, to issues of diversity, representation, and inclusion. Their ideas and stories are best told from their mouths, so check out the links included with their highlights and be prepared to become better.

Shana T Bryant, Producer + Speaker + Author + Advocate

Personal Twitter | Terrible Allies Twitter | Personal Instagram | Terrible Allies Instagram | Website | Tumblr

In Shana’s article An Empathy Gap, she and three other women were at a networking event where, “conversation starters” were written on little cards and shared as icebreakers. She read one out loud, and the response to the question was unanimous from three other women nearby. Their response is touching, and a reminder of….well…we don’t wish to spoil too much, so please give it a read. We are also fans of her Terrible Allies comic strip. The comics provide reminders to Allies that the process to a no discrimination society is a journey. One to walk every day.

What specific thing have you done that you are proud of and want to share? Why are you proud of it?

2020 will mark my 4th year volunteering with the IGDA (International Game Developers Association) Foundation’s Next Gen Leaders Program. What is it? It’s a (brilliant) program aimed at supporting minority game developers through a multi-year series of mentorship, opportunity, development, and growth. Participants get passes to the Game Developers Conference — the premiere event for game developers; they get amazing content in the form of talks, workshops, and activities — specifically tailored to their lived industry experiences; and they get access to a broad array of talented industry elders, who have navigated many of the obstacles that software/tech/games presents us marginalized folks. It’s both a career level-up and a networking bonanza! (It’s also just a ton of fun, and hey you, you should apply next year.)

What I love about opportunities like Next Gen Leaders is it's like flexing a different set of muscles. NGL gives me the chance to talk about the intangibles and the totality of experience — the good, the bad — basically, the stuff that doesn't appear in the brochures. After so many years in any industry, there can be a tendency to settle in to what's comfortable (or at least, to settle for what's familiar); but coming of age in an adolescent version of the games industry — one that had yet to admit its problems with diversity and institutional biases — the desire to give back is what I always find pulling me forward. I jumped at the chance to volunteer with the IGDA Foundation. It has been rewarding in ways far beyond my wildest expectations, and its specific focus on underrepresented folks is critical, especially given the unique challenge people of color must overcome to manage a successful career in games.

Some More of Shana's Work

- Creator, Terrible Allies x The Mushroom Queendom
- Producer, Devil May Cry, The Outer Worlds, Remember Me, Mega Man, Okamiden, HoloLens
- Contributor, Game Devs & Others: Tales from the Margins (2018, edited by Tanya DePass)
- Contributor, Women in Games: 100 Professionals of Play (2019, edited by Meagan Marie)
- Speaker, Grace Hopper, PAX/Dev, ECCC, GDC x IGDA, Game Devs of Color, GeekGirlCon, & more

Tanya Depass aka CypherofTyr, Founder and Director of I Need Diverse Games

cypheroftyr Journal | Twitter | Twitch | Rivals of Waterdeep | I Need Diverse Games

Those of us on the Xbox Ambassadors Team have met CypherofTyr at PAX and other conventions. The lesson of hers that sticks with us most is from her talk, The Diversity Conversation You Need, but Don't Want. She explains how diversity has developed into a buzzword and "checkbox" that people are looking to mark. Tanya explains that check marking diversity as a goal isn't to actually include marginalized groups, but to satisfy minimum social expectations. Inclusion, in her opinion, is better than "diversity" as that would mean, marginalized developers featured on more panels besides diversity focused ones. Often diversity panels discuss how difficult it is to be in the industry, and that doesn't encourage new marginalized groups to join the industry. By having more inclusion through diversity panels AND marginalized groups on panels about other aspects in the industry, that is more encouraging AND includes new ideas and people.

What specific thing have you done that you are proud of and want to share? Why are you proud of it?

"I'm proud to be part of the Design/Play/Disrupt exhibit at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, UK because it shows that inclusion is important and the conversations I wind up in, the work I & other D&I advocates does matters at a higher level than a lot of people realize."

Some of Tanya's Work

- Racism in Watch Dogs 2 is Subtle, and that's how it won me over
- Ride or Die Mafia III Review
- Wandersong Diversity Consultant Release date: September 2018
- Far Cry New Dawn Diversity Consultant, Release date: February 2019
- She's a cast member on twitch.tv/dnd in Rivals of Waterdeep, an Actual Play D&D 5e show Sundays at 10am Pacific
- See her stream on Twitch at twitch.tv/cypheroftyr, playing some of her favorite games like Division 2, Witcher 3: Wild Hunt GOTY, Mass Effect 3, and Dragon Age II

Malik Prince – MVP Program Manager

Twitter | Hosting on Mixer

We admire Malik's wisdom in trusting the goodness of people. He regularly encourages us to focus on the actions of online users, and not assume the intent in online behaviors. His voice has positively influenced the policies within the Xbox Ambassadors to ensure patience in the pursuit of understanding. Also, if you ever have the opportunity to watch Malik host in person, that charisma he exudes so effortlessly over the screen is doubled!

What specific thing have you done that you are proud of and want to share? Why are you proud of it?

Malik wants to highlight his hosting at the MyXbox holiday event in New York. In this article he describes how it "was a moment for myself and other members of the black community of all ages to come together, much like

any other community, through our love of gaming.” Malik grins as he explains to me the joy of going to his home town and talking to kids in similar situations that he had growing up, “I got to inspire them and let them know that they could make it in gaming too…it is important to hold the door for people behind you and inspire those to walk through it.”